

CTC NEWSLETTER

**April
2005**



Help Save the Environment While Networking!

- **Appalachian Trail Conference—**
www.appalachiantrail.org
- **Chesapeake Bay Foundation—**
www.cbf.org
- **Defenders of Wildlife—**www.defenders.org
- **Friends of the Earth—**www.foe.org
- **National Audubon Society—**
www.audubon.org
- **National Wildlife Federation—**www.nwf.org
- **Nature Conservancy—**http://nature.org
- **Northern Virginia Senior Environment Volunteer Corps (NVSEC) -**
www.campagnacenter.org
- **Oceanic Society—**
www.oceanic-society.org
- **Save the Manatee—**
www.savethemanatee.org
- **World Wildlife Fund—**
www.worldwildlife.org

“Tell Me About Yourself” Doesn’t Mean “Tell It all”

- Arlene S. Hirsch, *CareerJournal.com*,
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When an interviewer asked a systems engineer to "tell me about yourself," he felt well-prepared to answer. After all, he'd been a professional for more than two decades and could recite the ups and downs of his career in great detail.

Perhaps too much detail.

The engineer was only halfway through a chronological explanation of his work history when the interviewer interrupted him to ask another question. The engineer was upset that he hadn't described several important accomplishments. Reflecting back, he realizes he could have been more succinct. He also should have grabbed the interviewer's attention at the beginning by saying something more memorable than where he grew up and why he majored in engineering.

If an interviewer gives you the stage in this way, understand that responding is trickier than you think. The following tips can help



“Lots of people act well but few people talk well, which shows that talking is the more difficult of the two.”

- Oscar Wilde

you provide a memorable and effective description.

1. Start with the end in sight.

Despite the deceptive phrasing, the directive, "Tell me about yourself," isn't a polite request for your life story. What the interviewer wants to know is, "Why should I hire you?" Knowing this,

your goal is to craft a convincing statement that will make the interviewer want to know more about you and what you can do for the company.

To prepare, you must develop a response tailored to the specific employer and addressing its interests, goals, and needs. You should revise, refine and rehearse your script until you can deliver it flawlessly -- with energy, enthusiasm and confidence.

2. Take the time to establish rapport.

When interviewers invite you to tell them about yourself, they're asking you to step into the spotlight, a place where extroverts and natural performers shine but where introverts can become anxious, tongue-tied and self-conscious.

If you don't feel comfortable in the limelight, look at the situation in a different way. Rather than delivering an oratorical performance, focus on establishing an emotional bond with your interviewer. Here's where body language can make a difference: Smile, make eye contact, lean toward and talk to and not at your listener.



"Listening well and answering well is one of the greatest perfections that can be obtained in conversation."

- Francois, Duc de La Rochefoucauld, French author

After you sketch the big picture, talk about specific experiences that are most relevant and interesting to an interviewer. Your research can pay off here. Learning as much as you can about the industry, employer and job (via the job description) allows you to zero in on your most relevant qualifications and experiences.

A senior communications manager experienced in marketing, public relations

and event management knew that a prospective employer, a nonprofit, was well known in the Latino community for a successful annual conference. In previous years, major politicians and government officials had been keynote speakers.

3. Sketch the big picture.

Experienced candidates should focus on the big picture first so that interviewers will place later information in the proper context. Start by providing an overview that allows them to see your career in total. Example: "Why don't I start with the big picture? As you can see from my resume, I have more than 15 years of experience in sales, marketing and general management, primarily in consumer products. The majority of that time was in the food-and-beverage industry. Thanks to my experiences at _____ and _____, I have an in-depth knowledge of the domestic and international marketplace for the food and beverage industries."

While preparing her tell-me-about-yourself statement, the communications manager decided to focus on three major experiences:

- her success in marketing and promoting high-visibility events;
- her high-profile experience working on political campaigns; and
- her experience with the Latino community.

However, she didn't use a chronological approach since these experiences happened at different points in her career.

4. Focus.

5. Showcase your communication skills.

Most interviewers observe how you organize and present information about yourself.

If your recent experience is most relevant, detail your accomplishments in reverse chronological order, giving less emphasis to your first few jobs. Conversely, if your most relevant experiences happened in the middle of your career, you may want to start your description at that point.

Assume, for example, that your first love is training, but recently you've spent more time working as a general human-resource manager. When interviewing for a training position, your tell-me-about-yourself statement might start: "Since training is my first love and one of my core strengths, I'll start by telling you about my training experience and accomplishments. While I was working at _____, I put together a very successful management-training program that received rave reviews from participants... ."

6. Highlight the benefits you'll bring to the employer.

A job search is a self-marketing campaign. Experienced marketing experts say to stress a product's benefits to the customer rather than its features, which could well be nifty but the customer might not need them. In a job search, you're the product. Toward that end, orient any discussion of your skills and experiences toward showing how they can benefit your future employer.

Example: "From the job description, it sounds to me like you're looking for someone who has strong project-management

skills. My greatest accomplishment as a project manager was at _____." From there you can describe the goals of the project, what you did to attain them and the subsequent results.

7. Spotlight the positive.

Never say anything negative about yourself or previous employers. If you decide to highlight earlier experiences instead of a more recent role, be sure to present all your jobs in a positive light. To do that, emphasize how and why your later experiences enhanced your abilities and scope.



"When I interview a job applicant, I am first interested in how he presents himself. How does he look; how is he dressed; what does he say; how does he answer my questions?"

*- Franklin Murphy, Chairman,
Times-Mirror*

For instance, after describing her training accomplishments, the HR executive might follow up by discussing how her success as a manager has given her a better understanding of organizational needs and naturally enhanced her credibility and performance as a trainer.

8. Provide details.

Don't expect interviewers to take your story on faith alone. Have specific examples ready to illustrate your skills. For example, to emphasize your problem-solving ability, describe a problem you faced in a past job, what actions you took to resolve it and the result of those actions. Whenever possible, choose a problem that's similar to those the prospective employer might face. To determine the type of challenge you might be asked to correct, refer to the job description or, lacking that, ask the employer to

describe the position so that you can focus your presentation effectively.

9. Disclose personal information cautiously.

When it comes to disclosing personal information, there's no right answer. It depends on two factors: whether you feel comfortable using personal details and what you plan to accomplish by doing so. While disclosing personal information can be a good icebreaker and rapport-builder, it also can backfire. You never know how an employer will process that information. Will a hiring manager be glad to know you're a family man or worry that you won't be free to travel or work long hours?

Keep the purpose of the conversation in mind. Whenever possible, mention personal information strategically. For example, an executive who's interviewing for a job with a toy manufacturer might share anecdotal information about his children's experience with the manufacturer's toys. An executive who knows that a job requires extensive international travel could share about his or her personal travel experiences.

10. Finish strong.

When should you return the floor to the interviewer? Use nonverbal signs as your cue. If an interviewer seems restless and bored, ask for feedback about your presentation: "Is this what you want to hear? Or is there something else that you'd like me to focus on?" This allows the interviewer to change the flow of communication and establishes a two-way dialogue.

If the interviewer remains attentive, you'll have more leeway in how you wrap up. The best way to end your statement is to put the conversational ball in the inter-

viewer's court by saying why you're interested in the company and position and asking for more information about current needs. Listen attentively to the response to determine what parts of your experience and accomplishments to mention as the interview progresses.

-- Ms. Hirsch is a career counselor in Chicago and author of several books on career issues, including "How to Be Happy at Work" (Jist



"Job applicants do not always act in their own best Interest."

- Robert Half

Publishing, 2003).



EDITOR'S NOTES

Career Counselor and Cyber-Wizard Susan Musich always recommends the "virtual interview" exercises on Monster.com (<http://interview.monster.com/>) to our JSP classes. There are

13 different types of jobs from which to choose a "virtual interview," including Executive, Management, and Administrative Support. In the interview you are presented with a series of questions typically asked for such a position. Each question will focus on a different competency in that field. You are provided with several possible answers and you must choose the best. After each question, Monster immediately gives you feedback on your answer.

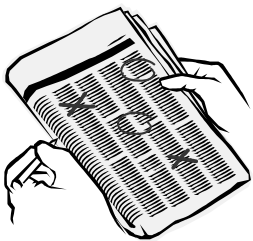
Monster.com also offers more good advice on preparing for an interview, types of interviews you might encounter, more general questions asked in interviews, how to land an interview, actions recommended



"Most people who fail to get the job they really want fail not because they are not qualified but because they failed in the interview. And most failure occurs because they aren't prepared."

- David W. Crawley, Jr.

after the interview, and more.



JOB LEADS

We celebrate Earth Day in April, so we are dedicating this section to environmental careers this month.

Environmental Jobs & Careers -
www.EcoEmploy.com

Environmental Career Opportunities -
www.ecojobs.com/

Environmental Career Center -
www.environmentalcareer.com

Green Dream Jobs: Business & Environ-

mental Jobs with Sustainable Employers
- www.sustainablebusiness.com/jobs/index.cfm

Naturalist Network -
www.environetwork.com

Defender of Wildlife—www.defenders.org/employ.html

EarthJustice—www.earthjustice.org

National Wildlife Federation —
www.nwf.org/careergateway/

National Parks Conservation Association—www.npca.org/jobs/

Sierra Club—www.sierraclub.org/jobs/

Wildlife Conservation Society—
www.wcs.org/home/getinvolved/careers

World Wildlife Fund—



"Language is the dress of thought."

- Samuel Johnson

www.worldwildlife.org/jobs/jobs.cfm



ATTENTION JSP GRADS!

JSP Follow-up Group Meetings

You are invited to attend two JSP Follow-up Group Meetings in April. They will be held in Room E-2118 at FSI on April 12 and 26 from 1000 to 1200.

Join us to network with others involved in job searches. The setting is very informal and there is no agenda.

CTC Job Fairs

CTC Job Fairs in 2005 are scheduled for:

March 29

August 23

October 25



"He suffered occasionally from a rush of words to the head."

- Herbert Samuel



"For good or ill, your conversation is your advertisement. Every time you open your mouth you let men look into your mind. Do they see it well clothed, neat, businesswise?"

- Bruce Burton

Earth Day — April 22, 2005

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